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CONTACT: Mark D. Weinstein
Executive Director of Public Relations
[937-766-8800](tel:937-766-8800) (o)
[937-532-6885](tel:937-532-6885) (m)
Mweinstein@cedarville.edu
[@cedarvilleneews](https://www.facebook.com/cedarvilleneews)

Gifts, Letters Connect Students and Nursing Home Residents

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Despite the restrictions of COVID-19, Cedarville University students are continuing to serve residents and staff at the Xenia Health and Rehab center from afar by sending gift baskets, writing cards of encouragement and praying for the residents.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the team visited the nursing home each Wednesday. Students split into groups and visited each individual resident's room to sing, pray and talk with them, seeking to share the hope of Christ through their conversations.

"It was discouraging not being able to go see the residents because of COVID-19, but God provided new ways for us to be involved in the nursing home," said P.J. Gusmano, a senior psychology major who has been involved in this ministry since his freshman year. This semester, the students have used letter writing to continue connecting with those at the home. They meet on Wednesdays, swapping weeks between lifting up the residents' specific prayer requests and writing them cards.

"Although we cannot see our sweet friends in person, we have been able to let them know that they are thought of and prayed for through sending notes that are personalized for each resident," said Mya Taylor, a senior psychology major who is in her fourth year of ministry at the nursing home. "My heart behind doing this ministry is to be able to help these residents feel known, heard and encouraged and to share with them the hope that goes beyond this life."

So far, the team recently sent a fall-themed basket to the nursing home's nurses, doctors, nursing assistants and receptionists. "The activities director told me that they were very thankful and had not been expecting the blessing of the basket," said Lia DeCoste, a senior nursing major who has also been involved in the ministry since her first year at Cedarville. "We're planning to send baskets for Christmas, Easter and at the end of the year."

The team has been greatly encouraged by their times of prayer together. In addition to praying for the residents, the team also prays for those who are impacted by COVID all over the world. "Prayer has been very beneficial to the growth of our team," Gusmano said. "We have been more intentional and have learned to trust God and his ways more than ever before, and even though we are not physically allowed to be at the nursing home, we know that God is still working there."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,550 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including its [Bachelor of Arts in Psychology](#) program, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health

science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

By Brianna Coffey